



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **International Infection Prevention Week Aims to Raise Awareness About a Dangerous Infection**

BISMARCK, N.D. – In conjunction with International Infection Prevention week observed October 14-20, 2012, the North Dakota Department of Health is raising awareness about preventing MRSA infections in the community.

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA, is a potentially deadly bacteria that is resistant to several antibiotics. Previously associated with a stay in a health-care facility, this infection now accounts for a growing number of infections acquired in the community. Fortunately, the spread of MRSA in the community can be limited with good hygiene practices.

“MRSA infections can occur in otherwise healthy people who have not recently been hospitalized or had medical procedures,” said Faye Salzer, HAI Activities coordinator with the North Dakota Department of Health. “These infections can spread through close skin-to-skin contact, contact with open wounds, poor personal hygiene practices, and insufficient environmental cleaning.”

Anyone can become infected, but the risk of infection in community settings may be greater:

- Where there is crowding – dormitories, locker rooms, crew camps, correctional facilities, military barracks and daycare centers
- Where there is frequent skin-to-skin contact – athletic sports such as wrestling, football and rugby
- When personal items are shared – towels, washcloths, clothing, razors, soap, etc.

“Everyone can play a role in preventing infections,” said Salzer. “Proper hand hygiene is the most important way to prevent MRSA. Other ways people can prevent MRSA is by cleaning and covering cuts and scrapes, cleaning shared athletic equipment between uses, not sharing personal items, and avoiding close physical contact with people who have open/draining lesions.”

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MRSA infections often appear as a skin infection that is red, swollen, pus-filled, or painful. Sometimes these infections can be confused with spider bites. If the MRSA infection invades the bloodstream or lungs, it can become very serious and even life-threatening. An individual is more likely to spread MRSA as long as he or she has an active infection.

If you have an MRSA infection, prevent the spread to others by following these steps:

**1. Cover your wound.**

Keep wounds that are draining, or have pus, covered with clean, dry bandages until healed. Follow your health-care provider's instructions on proper care of the wound. Pus from infected wounds can contain bacteria, including MRSA, so keeping the infection covered will help prevent the spread to others. Shower immediately after contact sports or practice using a clean towel.

**2. Clean your hands.**

You, your family, and others in close contact should wash their hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.

**3. Do not share personal items.**

Avoid sharing personal items, such as towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms that may have had contact with the infected wound or bandage. Regularly wash used sheets, towels, and clothes with hot water and laundry detergent. Use a dryer to dry clothes completely.

**4. Maintain a clean environment.**

Establish cleaning procedures for frequently touched surfaces, such as cell phones, remotes, doorknobs, weight training equipment and benches, etc., and surfaces that come into direct contact with your skin. Do not use a hot tub if you have an open wound. Clean tubs and showers after use with a disinfectant.

**5. Talk to your doctor.**

Tell any health-care providers who treat you that you have or had a MRSA skin infection. There are things that can be done to protect people that carry MRSA from getting an infection or spreading it to others when they are in the hospital or have surgery.

For more information, contact Faye Salzer, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.333.8389 or visit [www.ndhealth.gov/disease/Info/mrsa.aspx](http://www.ndhealth.gov/disease/Info/mrsa.aspx).

– 30 –

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